

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0373

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, IZ
SUBJECT: IRAQI MINISTERIAL CHANGES

REF: BAGHDAD 356

1. SUMMARY: CHANGES IN TWO IRAQI MINISTRIES MAY SIGNAL
A STEP BACKWARD FROM UTILIZATION OF APOLITICAL
TECHNOCRATS IN CABINET POSITIONS. THE REPLACEMENT OF
A THIRD MINISTER WITH AUTONOMOUS AREA RESPONSIBILITIES
SUGGESTS CONTINUING PROBLEMS IN ACHIEVING A PERMANENT
SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH PROBLEM. IMPLICATIONS FOR
INTERNAL POWER BALANCE ARE MURKY. END SUMMARY.

2. REPUBLICAN DECREE OF FEBRUARY 18 REMOVED FROM
MINISTERIAL POSTS BURHANNUDIN ABDUL RAHMAN, MINISTER OF
STATE FOR COORDINATION WITH THE AUTONOMOUS REGION, NAJIH
MUHAMMAD KHALIL, MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND MINERALS, AND
MUHAMMAD SADIQ, MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC
RESEARCH. NEW MINISTERS ARE KHALID ABID OTHMAN
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(AUTONOMOUS REGION), MUHAMMAD AYESH (INDUSTRY) AND MINPLAN
ADNAN HUSSAIN (HIGHER EDUCATION, ACTING).

3. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT ABDUL RAHMAN WILL LOSE
HIS OTHER POSTS (RCC MEMBER AND MEMBER OF BAATH PARTY
REGIONAL COMMAND), BUT WITHDRAWAL OF AUTONOMOUS REGION
PORTFOLIO SUGGESTS DISSATISFACTION WITH SLOW PROGRESS

TOWARD GOAL OF PERMANENT SOLUTION TO KURDISH PROBLEM. IT MAY BE SIGNIFICANT THAT ABDUL RAHMAN AND FORMER INDUSTRY MINISTER KHALIL RECENTLY COMPLETED A THREE-WEEK TOUR OF THE AUTONOMOUS AREA. ONE THEORY IS THAT LEADERSHIP WAS UNHAPPY WITH THEIR SUBSEQUENT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS. NEW MINISTER OF STATE FOR COORDINATION WITH THE AUTONOMOUS REGION, KHALID ABID OTHMAN, HAS BEEN A BAATH PARTY MEMBER SINCE 1958 WITH A VARIETY OF SENIOR PARTY AND GOVERNMENT JOBS TO HIS CREDIT (FULL BIO FOLLOWS BY POUCH).

4. FORMER MINISTERS OF INDUSTRY AND OF HIGHER EDUCATION ARE BOTH HOLDERS OF AMERICAN PHD DEGREES AND RESPECTED TECHNOCRATS. WHILE WE CONSIDER IT UNLIKELY THAT THEIR REMOVAL REFLECTS REGIME'S ANTI-AMERICAN BIAS, IT DOES INDICATE THAT LEADERSHIP MAY BE FAVORING GOOD POLITICAL CREDENTIALS OVER TECHNICAL COMPETENCE AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL. NEW MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, MUHAMMAD AYESH, IS AN RCC MEMBER WHO HAS HEADED IRAQ'S LABOR FEDERATION SINCE 1969. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE DOUBT ABOUT HIS EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND WHICH, IN ANY CASE, IS LESS IMPRESSIVE THAN HIS RECORD OF ARRESTS FOR BAATH PARTY UNDERGROUND ACTIVITIES. FOREIGN COMPANIES WITH PROJECTS IN IRAQ'S EXPANDING INDUSTRIAL SECTOR WILL SOON HAVE THE CHANCE TO JUDGE HIS METTLE AS AN INDUSTRIAL MANAGER. AYESH IS THE SUBJECT OF BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH
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IN BAGHDAD'S A-7 OF FEBRUARY 2, 1977.

5. MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH HAS SERIOUS PROBLEMS, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS ABILITY TO ATTRACT AND HOLD TALENTED PEOPLE TO POSITIONS ON UNIVERSITY FACULTIES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTES. FORMER MINISTER SADIQ VISITED U.S. LAST NOVEMBER IN APPARENTLY FRUITLESS EFFORT TO RECRUIT EXPATRIATE ARABS FOR SUCH POSITIONS. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT AL-HAZEN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE HAS RECENTLY UNDERGONE A PURGE WHICH HAS POSSIBLE POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS AND WHICH WILL LIKELY HASTEN THE DEPARTURE OF DISGRUNTLED FOREIGN SCIENTISTS. PLANNING MINISTER ADNAN HUSSEIN WAS NAMED AS ACTING MINISTER, BUT FINDING A GOOD FULLTIME REPLACEMENT LOOKS TO BE A VERY HARD TASK.

6. MINISTERIAL CHANGES RAISE LARGER QUESTION OF WHETHER VICE CHAIRMAN SADDAM HUSSEIN MAY HAVE LOST ROUND IN STRUGGLE OF PRAGMATISTS, WHOM HE TENDS TO REPRESENT, AGAINST PARTY IDEOLOGUES WHO LOOK TO PRESIDENT BAKR AND RCC MEMBER TAHA YASSIN FOR LEADERSHIP. APPOINTMENTS

OF TECHNOCRATS KHALIK AND SADIQ LAST WINTER WERE
VIEWED AT THE TIME AS A LOGICAL OUTCOME OF HUSSEIN'S
PRODUCTIVITY CAMPAIGN. TAHA YASSIN HAS
REPRESENTED OPPOSING SCHOOL OF THOUGHT, WHICH PREFERRED
TO TRUST MEN WITH PARTY CREDENTIALS RATHER THAN
ACADEMIC DEGREES. BAKR WOULD PROBABLY SUPPORT ANYONE
WHO PROVED SUCCESSFUL AT MANAGING IRAQ'S
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUT HE DOES FEEL GREATER PULL
THAN HUSSEIN FROM CLAIMS OF PARTY LOYALITS. THE
RECENT CHANGES REMIND US, HOWEVER, THAT THE VICE
CHAIRMAN ALSO HAS FRIENDS AMONG PARTY STALWARTS. CABINET
NEWCOMER OTHMAN, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS WORKED IN HUSSEIN'S
OFFICE, THE ACTING MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION IS
GENERALLY REGARDED AS ONE OF THE VICE CHAIRMAN'S MAIN
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ALLIES ON THE RCC, AND MUHAMMAD AYESH LENT HIS
POLITICAL SUPPORT TO THE PRODUCTIVITY CAMPAIGN.
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